

WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL

Cemetery Group Meeting Notes Tuesday 5th September 2023 10.00am

(plus updates from work party 28th September 2023)

Present:

Andy Fulcher representing ESS Ltd
Ian Webster
Anne Westover

Apologies from:

Linda Merriam Cemetery Clerk
Mike Hawes
Paul Tynan ESS Ltd

1. Meadow (former paddock) management, second cut due by mid-October.
Update, actually carried out on 28th September at time of work party.

Andy advised that two cuts per year should be sufficient. Cut includes a cut and mulch (chop) arisings before leaving them to dry out and decay.
2. Other tasks in the meadow area are to clear nettle from sub soil bunker so that is more visible. Topsoil in bunker is not used at present time but would be useful. Agreed that the west edge of the meadow (burial zone) would benefit from a strim to ensure that fence line/young trees are kept clear.
3. ***Additional note:*** Anne has sent Alison Renshaw the wording for a possible permanent notice (to replace the faded notice) on the main board to highlight the presence of the bunker (south west corner of the meadow) for spoil.
4. Agreed it would be advisable to request that a light trim of the roadside (B1438) hedge. To be added to tree works to be carried this Autumn (ESS Ltd have quoted with others). This is to ensure visibility on exit from the cemetery.
5. Grave levels it was suggested that an annual review of graves, late summer would be useful, in order to agree which graves are in need of topping up/or levelling down with topsoil and seeded. Suggest this item requirement goes into the contract wording.
6. Grass Memorial Garden needs some tidy up as grass is covering the tablets. It was agreed that a strim and collect/blow of grass needs to be carried out at next cut (done on 28th September). Volunteers could cut back grass turves if needed and if time permits.
7. Gravel Memorial Garden this was recently weeded by volunteers, box hedge cut and cleared, mulch added at the base. Despite keeping the blight away there are some indications of box moth and caterpillar damage. This needs to be kept under close review as the damage, if persistent, can be fatal to box. We may need to spray early in 2024. Further weeding needed (as of 28th).

Ideally an annual June cut should be carried out (to ensure blight is controlled) and should be set out as a task in the contract. Alternatively, a day works rate could be added into contract wording for occasional and miscellaneous tasks such as tree trimming, box hedge cutting, weeding gravel and mulching.

8. Lime Avenue and brambles in Aucuba bushes Bramble needs some control as it is popping out of the tops of the bushes. Peony now dying back after summer season. Limes were pollarded early in 2023.
9. Tree works including yew avenue, conifers and leaning conifer trunk, southern boundary hedge. Quote received from ESS Ltd. To be reviewed against others. Anne to contact Town Lands Trust too.

Note on 28th it was observed that a large pile of sub soil has been placed near a recent burial. Linda to contact COOP funeral services and ask them to remove this to the bunker.

10. Rabbit control, options for winter 2023 No control took place over last winter/spring season. Agreed 2 treatments (as quoted previously) may be needed early 2024. Situation with rabbits to be reviewed over winter. ESS Ltd will send a 2023 quote for gas control of the burrows and warrens.
11. Litter and wheeled bin collections Clerk has requested designated bins for green waste and rubbish. Currently the two green and one brown bin get used for all waste.

2023 all three bins still used for all waste. A compost heap could be considered and would be useful if used properly. We would check and locate next to bin compound.

12. Grass cutting Andy Fulcher advised that the lawn cemetery was cut and collected (when grass is long) or blown when grass is shorter. There are margins (of varying widths) on the whole southern boundary (includes snowdrops), the west boundary and approx. half of the north boundary which only needs to be cut once per year. These are hedgehog highways and we have some elderly hedgehog homes hidden up along the hedges too. Anne to ask Niki about updating.

We may need to consider controlling the blackthorn on the northern boundary to prevent further encroachment. Young and young-mature trees need protection from strimming/deer/rabbits and we will consider protection by stakes type barricade.

13. Further burial space In discussion with Linda we consider that the next memorial garden area and future burial rows need to be planned out and drawn up. I am happy to do this using a b/w base plan at scale. The current memorial garden should last approx. ten more years by the current calculations. A new one should be set out well before this along with the next tree row.

A measure up on the ground would be useful, including for marking out the next two/three burial rows (using stakes).

Cemetery Group/WMPC Tasks

14. 'Older' Garden of Remembrance Seat repairs, sand and treat needed. Could this be carried out by Men's Shed group? Anne to check. A seat on northern boundary will need replacing soon and relocated away from the trees.
15. Bier House Door repair (shaving off a sliver from the base) was carried out by Simon H and Mike H. Waterbutts still need some refinement in terms of overflow pipes.
16. Volunteer work parties last Thursday each month 10.00am. On the 28th September approx 3 hours of work carried out on floral litter collection, bin area clean up, two dead trees removed, general check over and conversation with Paul Tynan who had popped by to talk to the operative cutting the meadow.
17. Tasks: Bag up last mulch to clear bunker for new chippings DONE
 - Mulch trees and new hedges
 - Litter /wreath / debris collection
 - Small pruning jobs including cutting out blackthorn bush from grave near southern boundary (near pine, oak and whitebeam tree.
 - Coppice hazel bushes to the ground and use stems for tree protection 'baricades'
 - Clear and fill northern hedge gap and encourage newly planted oak.
 - Remove elder where invading the yews bushes and graves.
 - Remove plastic and cut around new tree plantings.
 - Protect new trees with more substantial posts/timber rail.
 - Plant daffodil bulbs in Autumn if available through the ESC scheme
 - Clear snowdrop area of deposited clay grave arisings and plant more bulbs in February 2024.
 - If time permits consider weed control and topping up of some of the kerbed burial plots with course shingle.

New Tools needed to help with all tasks

We are suggesting the following (possible locality grant from ESC Councillor Noble):

Strimmer and light weight hedge cutter with batteries

Forks x 2

Light spades x 2

Broom for gravel and leaves

Grass rake

Grass shears

Maintenance operative

Concerned that tasks previously carried out are no longer supported and volunteer time is limited.

Ideally regular tasks would include flower, litter, wreath clearing, tidy up of bin zone, weeding memorial gardens, shingle and soil top ups, plus other general tidy up and management tasks.